



A
SERMON
PREACHED
BY MASTER CLEAVER: *K*
on Psalm 51. verse 1.



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The Doctrines of this Sermon following.

- 1 The exercises of Religion belong to the greatest as well as to the meanest.
- 2 Griuous sinnes repented for, do not disable men for the seruices of God.
- 3 They that do profitablie intertaine Gods message, will giue a good testimonie of his messengers.
- 4 He that hath obtained pardon for sinne, will not be ashamed that men should heare of it, if it be expedient.
- 5 Whosoener will haue a full discharge from all his sinnes, must flie vnto Gods mercie in Christ.
- 6 Vnrepentant sinners are great debtors.





PSAL. 51. THE TITLE.

To him that excelleth. A Psalm of Dauid, when the Prophet Nathan came vnto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

THe historie of *Dauids* great and grievous fall into adulterie and murder, and his recoverie out of the same by sound and heartie repentance, is well knowne vnto those that are but meanelly exercised in the reading of the Scriptures. Hereof is this *Psalm* left as a memoriall vnto all succeeding ages : and in the *Title* thereof, which hath been now read, we may obserue these three things.

First, the disposing of the *Psalm*, to whom it was committed for the vse of Gods people, *To him that excelleth*, that is, to him that had the chiefe charge in singing with instruments, which was then a seruice of God, ordained of *Dauid* King of Israel, by *diuine institution* : and thereunto were appointed certaine singers, whereof some were principall men, who had the directing and ordering of the rest; such as were *Ieduthan* and *Asaph* and their posteritie : now to him that was the chiefe man in *Dauids* time was this *Psalm* committed, that he might appoint, when and how it should be sung for the benefit and edification of the Church of God.

Secondly, the pen-man or writer of this *Psalm* is declared, which was *Dauid*; who by the instinct of Gods Spirit

did compose the same, and leaue it vnto the Church as a paterne worthy imitation for all penitent sinners, especially such as haue fallen after their conuersion and regeneration.

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Thirdly, the occasion hereof is shewed, *viz.* the coming of the Prophet *Nathan*, to admonish and conuince him of his offences committed, both in defiling *Bath-sheba* the wife of *Uriah*, and in seeking to couer that foule fact by adding murder thereunto.

Doct. 1.

Religious seruices belong vnto the greatest.

Psal. 5. 3. 7.

A Psalme of David. What a worthie and honorable King *David* was; what a mightie people he had the rule and gouernment of; and, what weightie imployments lay vpon him, both in the times of warre and of peace, none is ignorant that knoweth the stories of the holy Scripture: yet (as we may obserue in this and sundrie other places) he applies himselfe vnto the writing of *Psalmes*, and therein expresseth his holy care that he had of all the particular seruices of God. Now from his example, which is recorded and recommended by the holy Ghost vnto all posteritie; this Doctrine ariseth; That Religious exercises do belong vnto the greatest, as well as vnto the meanest. *David* (as we haue partly heard) was a King very mightie, verie prosperous, very victorious as any at that time in the whole world, yet did not he thinke himselfe (neither indeed was he) exempted from confession of his sins, and lamentation therefore: from making earnest petitions for mercie, and for the obtaining of the Spirit of God, and of the graces thereof, whereby his languishing and bleeding heart might bee comforted and healed, and his former strength renewed and increased, &c. as in the bodie of the *Psalme* following doth euidently appeare. In the like sort doth he professe in another *Psalme*, saying: *Thou shalt heare my voice in the morning, O Lord: for in the morning will I direct my prayer vnto thee, and I will waite.* And againe in the same place: *I will come into thine house induced by the multitude of thy mercie, and in thy feare will I worship toward thine holy Temple.* Neither was this a worke of supererogation, as if he vndertooke more then

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then he needed to haue done, being a man of his place and of his condition; but it was a thing required, as appeareth Psalm. 2. where it is said: *Be wise ye Kings, be learned yee Judges of the earth. Serue the Lord in feare, and reioyce in trembling. Kisse the sonne lest hee be angrie, &c.* And in the time of the Leuiticall law, the Prince was to offer sacrifices as well as the people, and to acknowledge that hee by his sinnes had deserued to die as well as the meanest of his subiects, and that by the blood-shedding of that immaculate lamb Christ Iesus, he was preserued from the punishment due vnto him for his transgressions: and this is the honour and crowne of *Iehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Iosiah* and other kings of Iudah, that they walked before the Lord with an vp-right and sincere heart in the constant performance of all holy and religious duties.

Psalm. 2. 10.

11. 12.

The reasons of this point are these.

Reason I.

First, men that are in supreme authoritie, and in the highest places, doe owe as much homage and seruice vnto the great Lord of heauen, as those do that are the most abiect and contemptible among the sonnes of men: for the Lord made them as well as others; and he preserueth and protecteth them as wel as others, and if they pertaine vnto his election, he must saue them of his owne free mercie as well as others: nay, they are not onely as much bound vnto the Lord as meaner persons, but they are so farre more deeply indebted vnto him, as he hath more highly extolled and aduanced them, then hee hath others of inferiour note. And who should doe most worke but he that receiueth most wages? who should pay the greatest rent, but he that hath the largest reuenues? and who should shew themselves most loyall vnto their Soueraigne, but those who haue been most graciouslie and bountifullly respected by him? Neither let vs here imagine that any mans worldly greatnesse and excellencie can exempt him from being any longer a subiect vnto the King of Kings: for certaine it is, that the Lord is as farre aboue any earthly Monarch, as he is is aboue the poorest begger in his dominions; nay

indeed there is no comparison to be made betwixt the dignitie of the infinite God and of any finite creature, and therefore no man can haue any pretence in regard of his earthly preheminance, to withdraw his necke from the yoa^ke of obedience, or to pleade an immunitie from any Christian dutie or seruice.

- 2 Secondly, great men haue as much need to conforme themselues in obedience vnto God as any other whosoeuer; nay rather they haue greater need: for are not their affaires most weightie? and doe they not most of all need the Lords gracious assistance and furtherance therein? and can that be expected any further then they yeeld vp themselues to walke in his waies? No surely, and therefore it stands them vpon to be of all others most carefull to please the Lord; especially seeing that great corruptions are vsuall attendants vpon men of great places: they haue many strong lusts that doe continually haunt their soules: they haue abundance of pride and hautinesse of spirit, that cannot easily be subdued; they haue many worldly affections and desires, that can hardly be repressed: and in a word, they lie more open vnto fore and dangerous temptations then any of their inferiors doe, and in that respect ought they to be most conuersant in the seruices of God; that so naither sinne, nor Satan may preuaile against them.

- 3 Thirdly, the necessitie hereof appeares in regard of the good euent that will certainly follow hereupon; which is this, that the more they labour to honour God, the more he will aduance and honour them: religion and piety is that which doth establish the thrones of Princes, and causeth them to bee still more eminent and excellent. What made *Dauids* Kingdome so firme vnto him and his posteritie, but that he vnder-propped it as it were by his faithfull prayers, and other good seruices, and laid a sure foundation thereunto by the continall zealous obseruation of all Gods sacred ordinances? And on the other side, what overthrew the Kingdome of *Ieroboam*, of *Ahab*, and other wretched Kings of Israel, but their impietic against the Lord,

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Lord, in that they cast off his holy precepts, and set vp abominable idolatrie in stead thereof? this was the vtter overthrow of them, and theirs, and this caused their names to be as it were hanged vpon a gibbet, and to carrie an ill fauour in all succeding ages euen to the end of the world, so that men cannot make mention of them, but they haue a very ill conceit of them.

Now (to make some vse of the point in hand) this serueth Use 1. first of all for the iust reproofe of a great many, that doe wonderfully forget themselues when they are aduanced to high places in the world; falsely imagining that they are not so strictly tied to serue God, as others of lower degree are: that they are not bound to meditate on their faults; to bewaile their foule and bloudie sinnes; to acknowledge them vnto the Lord with shame and remorse, and earnestly to craue pardon for the same: but especiallie to acknowledge their hainous and scandalous offences vnto men, and to giue testimonies of their repentance vnto such as haue been witnesses of their falles, that they thinke an vnreasonable thing to bee required of them: they disdain to be so base minded (for so they account it) as to vilifie themselues before their inferiours: it is too much precisenesse (say they) to exact it, or to looke for it at the hands of Gentlemen, or Noble men, or the like: and so in effect they make matters of religion to be but a meere drudgery, to be imposed vpon vile and abiect persons, and not at all pertaining to men of dignitie and worth. But what say they to *Dauid*? Hee set himselfe with his whole heart to seeke the Lord, and counselleth his sonne *Salomon*, To take heed to the charge of the Lord his God, to walke in his waies; and to keep his statutes, his iudgements, and his testimonies, &c. *1. King. 2. 3.* Doe they thinke themselues greater, or better then *Dauid* or *Salomon*? or was it needlesse for them to be so forward in matters of godlinesse? No surely; it were meere madnesse for any so to conceiue: and therefore let such men beware how they make so light of things that concerne their euerlasting saluation, or destruction; and let them know that

that it proceedeth not from magnanimitie that any doth cast off the yoke of Christ; but indeed from basenesse of mind, in that hee chuseth rather to be a bondslaue and vassall vnto Satan, then a freeman vnto God; and for those that take scorne to be religious, and to goe vnder the name of Gods seruants, let them vnderstand for their terror, that the Lord taketh scorne to intertaine such sinfull creatures into his seruice, and that therefore they are not religious, because the Lord will not vouchsafe them so much honor: and withall let them remember that this is a very fearefull stroake of God vpon them, that they should be so damnablely deluded, as to esteeme it a matter of greater credit for them to bee slaues vnto Cards and Dice, to quaffing and drinking and such like works of the flesh, & so consequentially to be enthralled vnto the slaue of slaues, euen Satan himselfe, then to be in subiection vnto the Lord, and so to bee commanders in their owne hearts, and to enioy true and perfect libertie and freedome.

- 2 Secondly, here is a confutation of them that thinke themselues sufficiently priuiledged from constant reading, meditation, prayer, & such like holy duties, because they are set in places of gouernement, and haue manifold weightie affaires to deale in: this is no sufficient apologie for their slacknesse and backwardnesse in Gods seruice: for had not *Dauid* a mighty Kingdome to gouerne, and many battels to fight, and great diuersitie of imployments to busie his head about? yet could hee find his times to call vpon the Lord, and to magnifie his name; to meditate in his statutes, and to write sundrie excellent and heauenlie Psalmes, for the benefit of Gods Church vnto the end of the world.

Deut. 17. 18. 19 And we may note in the 17. of Deuteronomy, that among other things, this is giuen in charge vnto him that should afterwards raigne ouer Gods people, that hee should haue a copie of the Law written in a booke, and that he should *reade therein all the daies of his life, that he might learne to feare the Lord his God, and to keepe his commandments*: and if Kings be not exempted from this worke, how can others
perswade

perswade themselves that they haue an immunitie and a kind of dispensation therefrom, sith their businesses and affaires are nothing so many, nor so weightie as those of Princes and great Potentates are. Let all those therefore that feare the Lord, cast off all slothfulnesse and carelesnes, and lay aside all carnall excuses, and learne with *Daniel* to obserue set-times for prayer and such like Christian exercises: which if they can conscionablie performe, they shall find, that they are so farre from hindring of them in the workes of their callings, that they do exceedingly further them in the same, and cause euery good thing to prosper in their hands.

A Psalm of David, &c. after he had gone in to Bathsheba.]
It was a great & fearefull crime that *David* had committed, yet after y^e, he was imployed by God in penning this *Psalm*, and diuers others: whence this Doctrine ariseth, that,

Griuous finnes repented for, do not disable men for the seruices of God.

Doct. 2.

Great finnes repented for, do not disable for Gods seruice.

David had notoriously offended in this matter of *Vriah*, yet when he had with griefe and inward remorse acknowledged his faults, and obtained pardon for the same, he lost not his office, but was still vsed by the Lord as a pen-man of the Scriptures, and as a maruellous fruitfull and excellent Prophet. And the like may be seene in others, as in *Rahab* the harlot, who being considered but in her vnregenerate state, and in the nature of mankind, was in a lamentable case, as being quite dead in sinne, and liable to Gods wrath, as all both Iewes and Gentiles were: but if she be considered not onely as one of *Adams* daughters, but as none of *Abrams* daughters, nay as one of *Chams* daughters, this will make her case much more griuous: but if we further consider that she was not an ordinary Cananite, but one of a cursed citie, euen of *Iericho*: and not only of that execrable place, but a woman noted and branded with infamie for being a common harlot therein, this will cause vs to iudge her to be in a very wofull state indeed: yet notwithstanding she was dead in sinne; a cursed Cananite, of a

Iosua 2.

Matth. 1. 5.

Iohn 21. 15, 16,
17.

Marke 16. 9.

Reason.

1. Cor. 7. 11.

curfed citie, and a very wretched creature in that citie, notwithstanding all this (I say) she was first appointed in Gods good prouidence to be the hostesse of his messengers that came to view that countrey, and to be an instrument of ministering reliefe and safetie vnto them, so that all the Israelites were beholding vnto her: and then afterward she was vouchsafed that honor, as to be one of the great-grandmothers of the Sonne of God. And what shall we say of *Paul*? was not he a persecutor, an oppressor, a blasphemers, and a causer of others to blaspheme? yet when he was thoroughly humbled for his hainous offences, he was as profitable a member in the Church, as euer there was any, if not more profitable. Somewhat may be spoken also concerning *Peter*, for the further confirmation of this point: for his fault was none of the least, when he so basely denied and forswore his master: yet after the resurrection, he hauing thoroughly repented for his fall, our Sauour committeth vnto him a speciall charge of feeding his sheepe and his lambes: and that he might not be dismayed, he doth againe and againe encourage him in his Apostolical function. And (not to multiplie examples for the prooffe of this doctrine) we see what great honor the Lord doth vouchsafe vnto *Marie Magdalene*, (which had been a very sinfull woman, out of whom Christ had cast seuen diuels) viz. that shee should be the first publisher of one part of the glad tidings of the Gospell, to wit, that our Sauour was risen againe.

Now the reason why sinnes thoroughly repented of, do not exclude any from the performance of worthie and excellent seruices vnto God and his people, is this, because vpon sound repentance, such sinnes are fully forgiven, and being forgiven, they are as if they had neuer been committed in Gods account and estimation: whence it is that the Apostle *Paul* telleth the penitent Corinthians, vpon their godlie sorrow which they had inwardly conceiued, and outwardly expressed, *that they had in all things shewed themselves to be pure*, concerning that matter which he had formerly laid vnto their charge; viz. their carnall remisse carriage

riage towards the incestuous person: 1. Cor. 5. 1. 2. If then sinne bee not impured vnto repentant sinners, but bee as a debt that is wholly remitted, how can we imagine that it should disable them from holy seruices, which they owe vnto the Lord? especially considering that wheresoeuer the guilt of sin is remooued, the venome and poison thereof is also taken away, and the raigning power thereof vtterly abolished: so that the remembrance thereof, and the remnants thereof (if there be any) doe rather helpe then hinder them in the works of godlinesse and of righteousness: for thereby their humilitie, their experience, their loue vnto God and man, and so consequently their fittnesse and readinesse to do duty vnto them both, are exceedingly increased: not that sinne can make men better, but because it pleaseth the Lord for the magnifying of his mercie and of his wisdom to draw light out of darknesse, and good out of euill.

Let vs not therefore be discouraged, albeit wee be compassed about with manifold infirmities, nay let vs not bee out of hart, though we haue broken forth into some grosse sinnes, and that since the time of our first conuersion: for that was the case of *Dauid* and of sundrie other of Gods best seruants, who were notwithstanding notable instruments of Gods glory and of his peoples good. Let not vs then so farre wrong both the Lord and our selues, as to imagine that he will not accept of vs and our seruices, because wee haue againe and againe prouoked him by our transgressions; neither let vs in that respect either withdraw our prayers altogether from him, or call more feeble and faintly vpon his name: for that proceedeth not from true humilitie, but from diffidence and distrust, and from a base conceit of his infinit mercie and goodnes: but let our iniquities draw vs oftner vnto the throne of grace, and make vs more instant and importunate for the procuring of a pardon, and then let vs assure our selues that where sin hath abounded, grace shall much more abound: and albeit we haue been vnprofitable, yea, hurtfull seruants in our places,

ces, yet vpon our sound humiliation, the Lord will be content to intertaine vs still, and to take our seruices that wee performe vnto him in as good worth, as if we had neuer at all offended his maiestie.

2 Secondly, sith the Lord doth set notable offenders a worke in matters of speciall imploiment, when once they haue heartily repented them of their euill works, therefore let vs hence learne not to reiect such, if at any time they bring vnto vs good exhortations, or admonitions: for that were as great folly in vs, as if we should refuse this & other Psalmes, because they were composed by *David*, who was ouertaken with hainous and scandalous offences: or as if we should reiect the Epistles of *Paul*, because he was once a mortall aduersary vnto the doctrine of the Gospell. Yet many deale as absurdly as this comes to: for let some that haue been great sinners bring vnto them the message of God, and minister vnto them sound reproofes taken out of the sacred scripture, and taxe them somewhat sharpelie for their irreligious and profane course of life, their answer is readie; what need you to be so hot against vs for these and these faults? haue not wee knowne you to haue been heretofore guiltie of the same, or greater? haue not you been a common swearer! a notorious Sabbath breaker? a notable drunkard, or whoremaster, or the like? and what of all these? should not therefore the holy things of God be accepted, because it pleaseth his maiestie to send them vnto you by such a man? this is as absurd dealing, as if some meane subiect should refuse a rich gift sent vnto him from his soueraigne, because he hath formerly seene the messenger that brings it him, clothed with ragged and torne clothes: what great matter is it how he hath been heretofore apparrelled? is the gift euer a iot the worse for that, or the giuers fauour euer a whit the lesse? let not vs deale so iniuriouslie with the Lord and his messengers, but when he thinketh good to imploy any that way for our benefit and good, let vs thankfully accept of them, and make vse of that which from the Lord they deliuer vnto vs.

When the Prophet Nathan came unto him.] Nathan was Davids subiect, and his inferiour euery way, yet sith the Lord pleased to make him an instrument of raising him vp againe after his fall, hee honoureth him with the title of a Prophet, and would haue al the world to know what a notable cure he had wrought vpon him: whence note this doctrine, that,

Those that doe profitably intertaine Gods message, will in the best maner that they can giue testimonie of his messengers. *Deut. 3.* They that profit by good teachers, will giue them a good testimony.

So dealt King David in another case, when Abigail had giuen him holy and faithfull aduice, and staied him from murdering her husband, and his family, what saith he? *Blessed be thy counsell, and blessed beest thou which hast kept me this day from comming to shed blood.* So Paul, making relation how strangely and miraculouſlie hee was conuerted, and thereupon hauing occasion to speake of Ananias, whom the Lord sent vnto him to open his eies, and to comfort his heart, he giueth a very reuerent testimony of him, as namely, that he was a godly man, as pertaining to the law, and such a one as had a good report from all the Iewes which dwelt at Damascus. *1. Sam. 25. 33. Act. 22. 12.*

Likewise in the Epistle to the Corinthians it is said, that if an vnregenerate man come into the congregation, and be reproofed for his sinnes, and the very secrets of his heart be made manifest vnto him, he will fall downe on his face and worship God, and say plainly, that God is in his seruants indeed. And it stands with reason, that they who haue receiued profit vnto their soules by any man, should giue a louing testimony of him: for, *1. Cor. 14. 24, 25.*

First, it argueth great loue in that partie, in that he was so careful for them in the things that do most concerne them. For what greater kindnes can be shewed vnto a man, then to endeuour to set him free from extremitie of miserie, and to aduance him to the height of al true felicitie? to deliuer him from the curse and vengeance of God, and to procure him a portion in the merits of Christ, and in the neuer-fading

ding comforts of the kingdome of heauen? Now if Gods children be of that disposition as to do good for euil, much more will they requite good with good, and expresse their louing affection by speaking well of such as haue been instruments of so great happinesse vnto them.

- 2 Secondly, they cleerely discern of Gods loue towards them in vouchsafing to send his Embassadors vnto them: and therefore they set an high prize euen vpon the rebukes that are ministred vnto them: they do not account them as swords that are drawne out to wound them, but esteeme them as a precious balme that is sent to cure them: and albeit they bring smart and disgrace with them when they are thoroughly applied, yet they like them neuer the worse for that, as knowing that the smart and disgrace proceed not from the reproofes, but from the sinnes which are re-prooued.

Use 1.

Which maketh for the iust condemnation of such as take it in ill part to be admonished, and thinke and speake hardly of those that deale with them in such a maner: they proclaime openly vnto the world that they haue profited little by Gods seruants, and therefore they may assure themselues that they haue been sent vnto them in iudgement, and not in mercie. And let such take heede how they rage and storne when they are checked and rebuked for their pride and vanity, and worldlinesse and such like corruptions, whereunto they are in bondage: for if they make not vse of Gods holy voice for their reformation, they may iustlie feare his heauie hand for their vtter destruction.

- 2 In the second place here is matter of encouragement vnto Gods seruants to deale boldly and faithfully in reprehending and exhorting, &c. as cause and occasion shall be offered: for though they haue sower lookes and hard vsage from some; yet may they expect better measure from others: they may now and then meet with some *Dauids*, that will acknowledge their faults and failings, and thinke and speake reuerently of them that haue dealt most faithfully with their soules, though very sharply against their sinnes.

Rebuke

Rebuke a wise man (saith *Salomon*) *and he will love thee*: as we haue an experiment in *Peter*, who carried a sincere affection towards *Paul*, notwithstanding his round dealing with him. *Paul* saw that he was out of the way, & that he deserved to be openly reprov'd, and therefore he doth not stand backe (as many a one would haue done) nor reason in this or the like carnall maner. Alas, shall I reprove such a worthy Apostle, a man of such wonderfull knowledge and excellent gifts? shall I tell him of his fault, as if he were to learne of me, who was in Christ long before me? shall I blemish him openly, & that before so many, that are his friends, and carrie a reuerent opinion of him? what do I know how he will take it? it may be he will reple, and others will ioyne with him, especially *Barnabas*, who seemes to be of his mind? and what a disadvantage wil that be to haue manie against one? and besides, what do I know how offensively it may be taken, when there shall be variance among our selues, &c. he troubleth himselfe with none of these doubts: but finding *Peter* to be sicke, albeit he were a Physician himselfe, yet he takes him in hand, and ministers spirituall physicke vnto him: he knew that God might haue glorie, and *Peter* and the rest benefit by his reproofe, and therefore he dealt plainly, and found successe accordingly; Galat. 2. 11. for none replied against him, but all that were faultie acknowledged their error, (for so much is implied by their very silence, if there were no more words vsed then are recorded, which yet is scarce probable) and *Peter* afterwards hauing occasion to speake of *Paul*, and of his writings, calleth him *his beloued brother*, commendeth him for the wisdom that God had giuen him, and reckoneth his Epistles among the holy Scriptures of God, as in right they deserue to be reputed. 2. Pet. 3. 15. 16.

Now that God which gaue such good successe vnto *Pauls* reproofe, can doe the like for his seruants still; and therefore let none be afraid to aduenture on that dutie when they are called thereunto, but cheerefully set vpon it with an expectation of a blessing, remembring for their comfort

comfort what the Wiseman saith, viz. that he that reproveth shall find more fauour at length then he that flattereth.

When he went in to Bath-sheba] In so much as David being touched with remorse for his grieuous fault, and therupon hauing obtained pardon, doth make open acknowledgement thereof, and is content to record it for posteritie, when the Lord would haue him so to doe; hence obserue this doctrine, that,

Doct. 4.

He that is truly penitent, will not be ashamed of a needfull confession.

He that vpon sound humiliation for sinne, hath obtained remission thereof, will not be ashamed that men should heare of it, if it be fit and needfull.

Dauids example maketh this cleere, who being reconciled vnto the Lord, sets downe his offence vnder his owne hand, and leaues this *Psalm* wherein it is recorded, that it might be read, and heard, and spoken of, and preached, and sung, that all Gods people then liuing, and all that should be afterwards in succeeding ages, might take notice of his fall, and be forewarned to take heed of such offences. The like to this he doth in another *Psalm*, setting downe what wretched conceits he had, how he fretted at the prosperity of the wicked, thinking them happie, though they were proud and impious, and Gods children miserable, though neuer so humble and religious: *So foolish was I* (saith he) *and ignorant; I was a beast before thee.* The like confession is made by Paul concerning his misled life in the time of his vnregeneracie: *I was* (saith he) *a blasphemér, and a persecuter, and an oppressor.* Neither is this strange: for,

Psal. 73.

1. Tim. 1. 13.

Reasons.

1

First, sin pardoned is not at all reprochfull; but the guilt thereof being taken away, the shame (which is due only to guiltie persons) is also removed. Christ his sufferings, when he was vilified and contemned for our sakes, did drinke vp all the infamie that otherwise would cleaue vnto vs.

2

Secondly, as the Lord himselfe hath no dislike of vs, when once we are at peace with him, so hath he the disposing of all mens hearts and minds, and therefore can cause them not to thinke the worse of his children for the offences, which they acknowledge: or if they doe thinke the worse

worse of them, it is their fault; and the Lord which hath bestowed the spirit of glorie vpon them, will cause all contempt to slide off, so that it shall not long hang vpon them. Of which points Gods seruants being perswaded, they do freely lay open their transgressions, when the Lords name may be glorified, or his people edified by that meanes.

Which maketh for the iust reproofe of those that are *Use 1.*
bold and audacious in committing of sinne in the view of the world, being nothing at all asham'd either of open impiety against God, or of outrages against men, and yet they will by no meanes haue any to know that they are penitent for their faults: they care not who knowes that they are miserable, but they will haue none to know that they are happie: (if yet they can be happie in whom this corruption beareth sway, whatsoeuer pretences they make of their sound repentance before God.) And why are they so loath to lay open their offences before men, when it is requisite that they should do so? because forsooth they thinke it a disgrace. What a folly is this, to imagine it a greater matter of disgrace to confesse sin, then to commit sin, and for want of confession to be held for impenitent persons? if they haue truly repented, it is no shame at all to let men vnderstand so much by a plaine acknowledgement of their scandalous crimes: nay it is so far from being a matter of reproch, that indeed it is a great honor vnto them: and therefore herein they deale as absurdly, as if a man that hath built himselfe a faire house, should be asham'd to relate that it was heretofore ruinous, and as it were an eye-sore to all that looked vpon it: or as if one that hath been a bankrout, should be asham'd to make it knowne, that now all his debts are discharged, and that he hath sufficient yeerely reuenues to liue vpon.

Let vs learne to be more wise and prouident, both for our *Use 2.*
soules and for our names, and be so far from being at charges (as many will be) to be freed from a publike confession, when the law of God and of man doth exact it of vs, that we rather voluntarily offer the same; that so God may haue
C more

more honor, and our soules may haue more peace, and men may receiue better satisfaction concerning the soundnes of our repentance, and so our names may be purged and freed from those staines and blemishes, which otherwise must of necessitie cleaue vnto the same.

PSALME 51. VERSE 1.

Haue mercie vpon me, O God, according to thy louing kindnesse: according to the multitude of thy compassions put away mine iniquities.



He Title of this *Psalme* hath been already spoken of: now followeth the *Psalme* it selfe; the first verse whereof consisteth of these two branches. First, a petition. Secondly, the reason thereof.

1 The petition is, that God would *haue mercie vpon him*, and more specially that he would expresse his mercie in *putting away his sin*. In which words the Prophet vseth a similitude taken from debtors, who being in their creditors bookes, do either vpon payment made, or vpon the debt forgiuen them, intreat that they may be crost out of the booke: euen so doth *Dauid* heere beseech the Lord, that he would blot out his iniquities, that they might not stand in record against him.

2 The reason to moue God thus to deale, is taken from his owne meere mercie and *louing kindnes*, and from *the multitude of his tender compassions*, which were farre more and greater then his transgressions were or could be.

Haue mercy vpon me, O God, &c.] Hēce the doctrine is, that

Doct. 5.
God only can
pardon iniqui-
ties.

Whosoeuer will haue a full discharge from all his sins, must go quite out of himselfe, and flie to the mercie of God in Christ.

So doth *Dauid* in this place, though he had been a verie holy man, euen a man after Gods owne heart, yet he neuer pleads

pleades for pardon in this respect, that he had done good service to God and his Church; that hee had made many good prayers, and Psalmes of praise; that he had subdued and brought vnder many cruell aduersaries of religion and of Gods people, that he had bin mercifull to the distressed, and ministred iustice and iudgement vnto the afflicted and oppressed: none of these are so much as mentioned, nor once thought of in the matter of iustification, but hee casts himselfe onelie and wholly vpon the louing kindnesse, and tender compassion of the Lord. Indeed such good works may be remembred to cheere vp the heart in the time of affliction, and to keepe vs from fainting vnder the burden of our corruptions; but not at al as meanes to satisfie Gods iustice, or to ransom vs from his displeasure: it must proceed from his free grace alone, that wee are reconciled vnto him, and admitted into his fauour. Therefore doth the Prophet *Hosea* exhort thus, *O Israel, returne vnto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquitie. Take vnto you words, and say vnto him, take away all iniquitie, and receiue vs graciously.* This course did *Daniel* take; though a very holy man, and plentifully stored with all manner of good works, and greatly beloued of the Lord, yet hee presumed not to offer vp his supplications and the prayers of the rest of Gods seruants *in their owne righteousness, but in the great tender mercies of the Lord.* He rested not vpon his owne sufficiencie, or worthinesse, nor vpon the generall stock of the whole Church, but betook him altogether to the free goodnesse and fauour of God. The same was the practise of the Apostle *Paul*, who was so far fro imagining that he could merit any thing by his owne works, that hee esteemed them *all losse and dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not hauing his owne righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.* What then? are good works so base? No, not in themselves, but when men put confidence in them for their iustification; they are of no worth for that purpose, but are to be reckoned as vile as the clay, and as the mire that lies in the streets.

Hos. 14. 3. 3.

Dan. 9. 18.

Phil. 3. 8. 9.

Now the reasons why we must goe out of our selues, and depend wholly vpon Gods mercie for the remission of our sinnes, are these.

Reason 1.

First, in regard of our owne vtter insufficiencie: for by nature, what haue we that is of any worth? our thoughts, words, and works are altogether sinfull: *Our very righteousness*, that is, our best works (before our regeneration) is *as filthie clouts*, altogether lothsome and abominable in the sight of God, and so farre from being of value to satisfie his iustice, that they cause vs still to runne into further arrerages; and can any reasonable man imagine, that casting our selues into new debts can be any discharge of the old? But if any doe disclaime the works that proceed from his nature, and yet hope to haue benefit by the works of grace which he doth, let him consider who it is that maketh him able both to will and to performe, euen the Lord, and then hee shall plainly see, that to satisfie him by such meanes is but to goe about to pay him with his owne.

Isa. 64. 6.

Phil. 2.

Secondly, as we ought to goe out of our selues in regard of our insufficiencie, so must we relie vpon Gods mercie for the pardoning of our sinnes, in regard of his allsufficiencie: for (as it is in this text) in him there is *great kindnesse, and a multitude of tender compassions*. Albeit *Dauids* adulterie and murder were very great, yet Gods mercie was infinitely greater: yea, though murder had bin a ranging sin in him, as it was in *Manasses*, yet the Lords kindnes is such, that he might easily haue bin freed both from the guilt & punishment thereof. There are some faults that earthly Princes are sworne not to pardon, as wilfull murder and the like, but God is not so restrained but that hee can forgieue any crime, if so bee that repentance follow thereupon: and indeed the greater the offences bee that hee remitteth, the more honor and glory shall redound vnto himselfe, according to that in the Psalme, *Not vnto vs, O Lord, not vnto vs, but vnto thy name giue the glorie, for thy louing mercy, and for thy truths sake.*

Psal. 115. 1.

Use 1.

This serueth first for the confutation of the Papiests, that stand vpon their owne merits, thinking to be iustified thereby,

by, and so shew themselves to be insolent traitors against the King of heauen, in that being infinitely indebted vnto him, they will as it were coine money of their owne for the paiment of their debts; but whatsoeuer they dreame of, their works will not goe for currant, but they shall find and feele that their sins are still in force against them: that they are so far from being in better case then al, that they are in worse case then any: that whereas they take vpon them to be Iudges of others and to giue them pardons, they are vile malefactors themselves, and haue obtained no pardon for their owne capitall offences.

Secondly, sith it is in the Lords hand to forgieue all iniquitie, therefore let vs seeke remission from him, and labor to performe those duties, whereby wee may be assured of forgiuenesse. One dutie is to *confesse our sinnes, and to forsake them*, for then (as Salomon saith) *We shall find mercy*. Prou. 28.13. Whereas if we promise peace vnto our selues, liuing in sinfull courses, or allowing our selues in the smallest infirmities, the Lord hath protested, that *he wil not be mercifull vnto vs, but the wrath of the Lord, and his ielousie shall smoke against vs* vnto our eternall destruction. Deut. 29.10.

Another dutie is, that if we desire that the Lord should be gracious vnto vs, we must passe by and forgieue the trespasses of our brethzen. *Blessed are the mercifull, for they shall obtaine mercy; and iudgement without mercie shall bee vnto them that shew no mercie*. Math. 6.12. Math. 5. James 2.13.

Thirdly, here is matter of comfort for such as are afflicted and wearied vnder the burden of their iniquities; Satan and their consciences charging them that they haue committed such foule euils, that no man liuing, no not their owne father would forgieue, if the like had been done against him: let them not bee dismaied for all this; it is the Lords office to pardon iniquitie, transgression and sinne, and his mercy is so infinite, that if we can repent and be truly humbled, he will fully forgieue, and for euer forget al our offences, how many and how great, and of how long continuance soeuer they haue been. Let not our sinnes therefore

fore driue vs from the Lord, but rather draw vs neerer vnto him, and then we shall find, that he is plentiful in compassion toward such as seeke his fauour.

Put away mine iniquity. Or blot it out of thy book, euē as a debt y^e is discharged. Whence we may note this point, that

Doct. 6.
Impenitent
sinners are
bankrouers.
Matth. 18. 24.

Vnrepentant sinners are great debtors: they are euē in the state of bankrouers: which is intimated in that parable of our Sauour, where hee compareth euery sinner vnto a seruant which did owe vnto his master ten thousand talents, that is, an huge and inualueable summe, which hee was no way able to pay. In which regard, Iesus Christ enioyneth vs to pray, *Forgiue vs our debts*: implying, that al our finnes are as it were as infinit debt, and euery particular is as a seuerall summe, and the law of God is the obligation or hand-writing, whereby we are bound: and therefore the Scripture vseth the phrase of imputing, saying, *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sinne*: where offenders are compared vnto debtors, who haue gotten a suretie, so that now there can no writ come out against them, because the debt is not reckoned to bee theirs.

Psal. 32.

Use 1.

Sithence the case standeth thus with all of vs naturally, let vs seeke speedily to haue our debt discharged: for otherwise if we bee surprisid and taken, it will be out vtter vndoing. Debts that are due vnto men, haue commonly daies appointed for the paiment thereof, so that till such a day come, they cannot be exacted: but he that is indebted vnto God, goes in danger euery houre, yea euery moment, because he may arrest him whensoever it pleaseth him. Againe, those that are bound vnto men, may be in such places, where they are sure their creditors cannot touch them: but where can any man bee exempted or priueleged from the Lords attachments? whither can he flie, but the Lords hand will reach him, and pull his soule from his bodie, and cast the same into hell fire? And whereas in other prisons there may bee some fauour and good vsage obtained, and the parties, or others for them may vse meanes for the satisfaction of their creditors, or their creditors may die, or they

they may die and so haue an end of their affliction, there can no such thing bee expected, when once a man is imprisoned in hell: there shall bee no ease, but continuall torture; God will neuer bee pacified after that time, neither the parties themselues, nor all the friends they haue in the world, no nor Christ Iesus himselfe can mitigate the Lords anger towards them, or redeeme them from that place of torment, but there they must continue euerlastingly, to indure the punishment inflicted vpon them, the consideration whereof should cause vs euen at this very present to grow to a settled resolution to repent for all our sinnes, that so in Christ Iesus our whole debt may be remitted. Let euery one enter into a serious view and examination of his owne estate, and reason thus with his owne soule; Haue not I bin a blasphemer, a prophaner of the Sabbath, a lyer, a riotous person, a worldling, or the like? if I haue bin such a one, haue I sought as yet reconciliation with the Lord, yea or no? if not, my case is fearefull: I am liable to his wrath and heauie indignation, and therefore it stands me vpon speedily to seeke his fauour, lest I perish suddenly, and there be no remedy: what do I know whether euer I shall haue this good motion againe, if now I make not vse thereof? therefore will I forthwith *seeke the Lord while he may be found, and call vpon him, while he is neere*, that so mine iniquities may be pardoned, his displeasure turned away from me, and his louing countenance shine cleerely vpon me. The Wiseman counselleth him that hath rashly entered into suretiship, that he should speedily deliuer himselfe, if possiblie he can: *Euen as a Doe* Prou. 6. 4. 5. *from the hand of the hunter; and as a bird from the hand of the fowler; giuing no sleepe vnto his eyes, nor slumber vnto his eyelids, till he haue effected it: now if the Lord will haue men so prouident for their outward estate, as not to sleepe one night in danger, much more carefull should we be for the state of our soules, that we vse not delays in setting them out of perill.*

And as we ought speedily to deale in the matters of our
soules,

Galath. 6.

soules, so must we be also careful to deale surely and soundly, not deceiuing our selues, as many do, by thinking, surely God hath giuen me an acquittance from all my sins, because I pray and heare the Word, and do not liue in adulterie, in drunkenness, in malice, in reuenge, and other such offenseuie sins: but these are not sure arguments that our iniquities are pardoned, vnlesse we both doe that which is good, and forbear that which is euill in conscience and in obedience vnto Gods law: and therefore let vs not content our selues with this, that we are better then others, but (as the Apostle saith) *Let every man trie his owne Workes.* For many may seeme good in comparison, who yet in deed and in truth are starke naught. Let not vs then be so foolish, as to suffer the diuell to make our acquittance for vs, for he will certainly beguile vs; but let vs get it vnder Gods owne hand and seale: let vs not conclude, that therefore we are in good case, because we forsake the practise of grosse sins, and do some outward duties, as pray and reade the Word in our families, and giue thanks before and after meat, and the like; for this is one of the diuels acquittances, or at the best, of our owne noting, and not authentique: but let vs trie whether we haue an inward hatred of all kind of iniquitie, and do constantly striue against our most naturall and most beloued sinnes: whether we haue a delight in the wayes of God, and doe still grow in neerer acquaintance with him, &c. If we can find these and the like notes of vprightnesse in our selues, then haue we cause of reioycing indeed; because the Lord hath enriched vs with the graces of his holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our redemption: and therefore let vs comfort our soules in this respect, being assured that we are perfectly blessed, because the Lord will impute no iniquitie vnto vs, but accept of that satisfaction which our Sauour hath

made for vs.
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